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ABSTRACT

The report describes and evaluates a 10-week program to help an adjudicated 18-year-old male with behavioral disorders living in a structured residential treatment facility to develop independent living skills. The experimental program consisted of three levels, each offering more independence, while providing support, guidance, and direction to the transitioning youth. Each level encouraged greater personal, economic, and emotional responsibility and independence. This report details the specific objectives selected (in the areas of employment, budgeting, management of finances, time management, home management, health and personal care, decision making, and interpersonal relationships), their implementation, and evaluation. Although this program was not effective with this particular subject and had to be terminated (due to the subject's participation in illegal activities), it was evaluated by social workers involved with the facility as useful and appropriate for individuals transitioning out of the residential program. Appendixes include the telephone interview protocol with social workers, a description of the independent living program, the program curriculum, guidelines for independent living, and a description of the role of the program mentor and of the Department of Family Services. Includes 8 references. (DB)

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Transitioning Behaviorally Disordered Young Adults From A Structured Residential Treatment Center Into Independent Living In A Small, Rural Community

by

Robert Conrad

Cohort XXXVIII

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A Practicum Report Presented to the National Master's Program for Child Care Administrators in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Science

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AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

8-19-91
Date

Robb Conrad
Signature of Student

Abstract

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Descriptors: Independent Living / Transitioning / Daily Living Skills / Functional Living / Life Skills / Employment Training / Work-Study / Recreation Skills / Emotionally Disturbed Youth / Behavior Disordered Youth

No independent living program was existent in this state for emotionally disturbed adolescents transitioning into life on their own from residential treatment.

The author designed and implemented an independent living program with goals and objectives outlined to promote successful independent livng from a structured residential treatment facility into productive adulthood. The program consisted of three levels, each offering more independence, while providing support, guidance, and direction to the transitioning youth. Each level encouraged greater responsibility placed on the youth, and greater emphasis on economic and emotional independence.

Interviews with social workers indicate a favorable response to the facility operating such a program for older adolescents. The program will continue to be offered as a service for appropriate youth on an individual basis at the facility. Appendices include social workers interviewed and general descriptions of the independent living program.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The setting for this practicum is the largest not-for profit residential treatment facility for emotionally and behaviorally disordered boys and girls in a sparsely populated northern mountain state. The facility is located in a small rural community located in the south eastern corner of the state. Youth served by this treatment center range in age from 6 through 19 and exhibit a number of problem behaviors in their homes, schools, and communities. The organization is the primary social service agency operated by the State Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church. The facility cares for 50 children, twenty-four hours per day, 365 days per year.

The facility is managed by the Executive Director, who is responsible to the Board of Directors. Serving immediately beneath him are members of the administrative team, who are each responsible for a major component, including residential services, therapy, education, special

activites, and business operations. The author of this report is the Residential Director, who oversees all living units, program development, staffing concerns, referrals, admissions, budgetary considerations for each living unit, and the overall treatment of each resident. The Residential Director supervises the Residential Coordinator who manages daily living unit operations through Residential Supervisors on the units.

The program is based on the Family Teaching Model, with Family Teachers providing direct contact to each child placed in their care. There are four living units, each with a capacity of ten, along with administrative offices, the on-grounds school, dining rooms, and a gymnasium located in the main structure, built originally to house 60 orphans. Three of these units serve boys, with unit assignment based on age, maturity level, and basic treatment needs. The fourth unit serves girls. A group home for ten older male residents is located on a ranch setting three miles outside of town. These boys typically are long term residents, with no family support upon whom they may rely after their dismissal.

The treatment facility is licensed by the State Department of Family Services and must follow the state guidelines established for child care providers. Most referrals for treatment come from Department of Family

Services offices throughout the state. Some referrals are made by school districts when children exhibit behavioral problems too severe to control in a regular classroom setting. One or two admissions per year are made on a private basis, costs being covered through monies from the Church. By policy, the agency serves only residents of the state, or those children that have family ties to this state.

Problem behaviors exhibited by the youth placed for treatment may include substance abuse, aggression, withdrawal, sexual acting out, vandalism, and theft. Most children are the product of dysfunctional family systems and have been abused physically, sexually, or emotionally. There is no socio-economic barrier from which residents are drawn. The program allows for gradual family reunification where aappropriate, but many youth have no families to which they may return. In these cases, alternative placements such as long term foster care or independent living must be sought.

Chapter 2

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Statement

No facility in this state offered an independent living program for boys and girls transitioning from a highly structured residential treatment program into a productive independent adult life. Several had been attempted, but none were successful.

Emancipating youth, optional for the court system at age 19 in this state, without proper transitioning into life on their own has been proven unsuccessful. The state "Child Protective Services Code" identifies those youth who may be candidates for an independent living program, and allows for payment to facilities offering this continuum of care option. None of the private residential facilities attempting such a program were still offering it as an option, nor were any of the three state operated agencies.

Documentation

As Residential Director, the writer maintained frequent contact with many social workers from all over the

state. Part of the responsibilities of this author included handling referral information and documenting the type of program required for each youth referred to the agency.

On several occasions, the author was approached regarding youth in need of an independent living program, as no suitable home existed upon whom the adolescent could rely. Difficult to place youth often remained at the residential treatment facility long past the recommendation that alternative, less restrictive, placement be located.

Social services agencies within this state are bound by law to place children within the state boundaries where appropriate programs exist. Because no independent living program existed, youth were forced to leave their home state, often after forming positive relationships within their communities in order to receive appropriate programming. Worse yet, youth were emancipated by the court system, without transitioning, having limited vocational skills, education, and income.

A work-study educational program, targeting youth ages 16 and over, has been operational at this residential facility for five years. A natural extension was to include an independent living program as a service offered to youth referred for treatment.

Through a telephone interview involving 20 social workers from various locations in this state, the author learned that all would encourage the development of an in

state independent living program and 12 currently had cases requiring such programming. The number of youth these 12 social workers handled needing independent living was 15. Each social worker indicated that he/she would support this facility in the development of an independent living program. Four youth were being served out-of-state, six were in residential treatment centers, and five were in foster care at the time of the interview. (See Appendix A)

Analysis

The process of implementing an independent living program for youth ready to transition from residential treatment entails a concentrated effort to locate suitable living quarters, continue with the youth's treatment issues identified in his/her treatment plan, and supervise the living situation.

At this residential facility, staff to resident ratio is two or three to ten. State standards require a minimum of one to six. Due to the severity of observed behaviors and emotional problems exhibited by the youth, a high staff to resident ratio is a necessity. The difficulties of utilizing staff time for the one or two residents per year ready for a transitional program are immense. In addition, Family Teachers on the living units do not have the authority to develop a budget based on the cost of implementing such a program. It was anticipated that the daily cost to provide the program would vary with each

resident, based upon his/her ability to contribute payment according to income.

The Residential Director has the authority and responsibility for program development and implementation. This position also has financial authority and is most aware of client needs due to frequent contact with social workers from throughout the state.

A number of facilities in the state had attempted the development of an independent living program, but each was discontinued. One facility had plans to reorganize and attempt to make this program operational once again. Reasons for the failure of these programs vary according to social workers and facility directors. Reasons cited include lack of educational training in pre-vocational skills, lack of supervision for the youth, and lack of support from social services.

After the telephone interview with social workers, a discussion was held among administrative staff at this residential center. It was decided that, with the educational component already in place, the Residential Director should undertake a pilot project with one resident. The candidate was selected, with approval from his social worker and the district judge, to begin the independent living program.

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature indicates that proper

pre-independent living training is a necessity for successul transition into responsible adulthood. Pasztor, Clarren, Timberlake, and Bayless (1986) identified emphasizing strengths and needs and providing "thinking", "feeling", and "doing" opportunities with respect to adult role functioning and social networking. Their recommendations include individualized services provided to the adolescents enrolled in the program, beginning to work with younger adolescents toward their goal of emancipation, and viewing the process as multi-dimensional, designed to enhance an adolescent's growth toward independence and the mastery of life experiences. They further state that transitional funding must be provided in order for youth to meet their basic needs and be able to build their own resources as they move forward to emancipation.

All authorities seem to agree that this pre-training occur in order to lead to a successful transition. Many curriculum guides are available for this purpose, both from special education suppliers and from state agencies. One such guide in "The Road to Independent Living: A Guidebook for Teenagers" (Bayless, 1986). This guide is in workbook format and places major emphasis on goal-setting, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and career choices.

Formats for these guides vary, but most suggest the basic areas of emphasis as being educational skills,

vocational skills, job search and employability skills, money management, home management, consumer skills, locating and utilizing community resources, transportation, health care, and locating housing (Westat, Inc., 1986). In addition, decision making and problem solving skills, maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, managing time, and practicing social skills are critical to independence. The Westat, Inc. report to the Kansas Department of Health and Human Services defines the skills such as money management and work related skills as "tangible or hard" skills while referring to decision making and interpersonal skills "intangible or soft" skills. The report states "While the hard skills are often first associated with independent living, knowledge of the hard skills alone is virtually useless unless accompanied by some degree of proficiency in the soft skills. It takes a long time, perhaps a lifetime, to master these skills" (Westat, Inc., 1986, p. 5).

Although experts recognize the broad range of skill acquisition requirements, a widely accepted working definition of training for independent living is not agreed upon. The Arizona Department of Economic Security Administration for Children, Youth, and Families formulated this concise definition: "The accumulation of attitudes, values, skills and experiences necessary for assuming responsibility for one's self" (Preparing Youth for

Successful Independent Living in Arizona, May, 1986, p. 9). They define living independently as youth having the knowledge ..."to obtain adequate housing, clothing, nutrition and health care; that they will have employment income sufficient to meet these basic requirements; and that they will have a sense of 'well-being' which includes the ability to maintain relationships with family and friends, have appropriate recreational outlets, have emotional security, and be able to access community and governmental resources as needed" (Preparing Youth for Successful Independent Living in Arizona, May, 1986, p. 9)

While most authorities agree that a team decision involving social services, the adolescent, his/her family, and child care providers regarding an independent living program option versus adoption or long term foster care be made as early as possible (generally when the youth is age 16), statistics indicate that a larger number of youth are remaining in substitute care until the age of emancipation (Pasztor, et al).

The growing recognition of need has prompted state and social service agencies to respond with curriculum development, but successful implementation remains a challenge in many areas for the emotionally and behaviorally disordered youth. Many reports document the approaches and successes of programs designed for the mentally handicapped

or learning disabled youth transitioning from institutional care to independent living. Such youth are protected by federal legislation such as EHA and IDEA and have been in the public eye for many years. Society has been less tolerant of juvenile offenders or the emotionally disturbed youth who finds himself or herself unable to return to a dysfunctional family system where the potential for abuse or illegal involvement could further harm him or her. Treatment facilities are beginning to answer this challenge through the development and implementation of programs for such boys and girls.

Chapter 3

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, and EVALUATION METHODS

Goal

The goal of this practicum was to transition one youth selected for independent living into successful self-functioning within the community.

Objectives

The following goals were projected for the ten week implementation period of this practicum:

1. The resident will demonstrate the transitional living skills of money management, comparative shopping, outlining educational goals, and employability readiness with 85% accuracy on workbooks and exercises, as well as in daily tasks assigned on the residential living unit at the treatment facility.

2. The targeted youth will move into private housing available on campus and remain within behavioral guidelines established by the facility.

3. The youth will assume responsibility toward rent at a 5% increase weekly to a maximum of 40% of income.

4. The youth will contribute a budgeted portion of earned wages to a savings account, based on income.

5. The youth will purchase food within a budgeted amount and submit weekly menu plans for the Residential Director's review.

6. The youth will, at a pre-determined time, submit a weekly schedule of outings to the Residential Director.

7. The youth will obtain and maintain successful employment.

8. The youth will continue counseling and treatment objectives as outlined in the treatment plan.

9. The youth will remain at this phase of the program one to two months.

10. The resident will provide documentation of additional savings over his/her initial savings balance.

11. The youth will locate suitable housing within the community and make required deposits.

12. The youth will continue successful employment.

13. Formal contact with the Residential Director will become less frquent to one meeting per month by the anticipated time of emancipation.

14. The youth will demonstrate financial independence and be recommended for emancipation.

Evaluation Methods

The accomplishment of objective 1 was measured by completion of assigned tasks at the specified accuracy level, as well as observation by child care workers and classroom instructors. This comprised Level I of the implementation process. The literature suggests a proficiency in the above skills prior to transition.

The assessment procedure of objectives 2 through 9 was conducted weekly through personal contact between the resident and the Residential Director. Financial obligations and payments were reviewed, adherance to Independent Living Guidelines discussed, employment concerns and future plans regarding savings addressed. The Residential Director also maintained bi-weekly telephone contact with the youth's social worker in order to keep that office apprised of the youth's progress. This portion of the program comprised Level II. Advancement from this level occurred upon the consensus of the youth, social worker and Residential Director. Advancement was contingent upon successful demonstration of outlined objectives.

The increasing responsibility of the youth on a weekly basis provided for gradual transition. The focus was the application of the living skills acquired in Level I within a framework of support and guidance. This gradual process provided the resident with the opportunity for

increased experiences but structured activities and advancement while under a regular schedule of meetings with the Residential Director.

Objectives 10 through 14 were measured through case conference meetings at which the youth provided documentation of each. The role of the Residential Director lessened as the adolescent demonstrated increasing responsibility for himself. Although formal connection to the residential facility is terminated at the time of emancipation, informal contact with those individuals having close relationships with the adolescent may continue.

It is at the completion of Level III that the youth was to be ready for emancipation by the court system.

Chapter 4

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Information Collection

As referred to in Chapter I, this sparsely populated state had no independent living program available, although the need was documented through program option needs identified by social workers throughout the state. This rural state has less to offer the behaviorally or emotionally disordered adolescent than surrounding states with larger urban areas.

Goodwill Industries has long been known throughout the country for its emphasis on productive adulthood for mentally handicapped individuals. During the past two years, Goodwill in this state has shifted emphasis to behaviorally disordered youth and adults. An independent living program has been attempted by this organization.

In this state, Goodwill is located in the downtown area of the capital city. The three story structure houses male and female adolescents and adults. The independent living

option consisted of a small apartment located within the facility. The transitioning individual was integrated with the rest of the population and supervised by residential personnel. As the time approached for the resident to leave the facility, he/she located in-town housing and ties with Goodwill were broken. The downfall of the program appeared to be in lack of training while in the transitional apartment, and lack of support following the move into alternative housing. Although the coordinators of this program have admitted limited success, administrative personnel announce their intentions to continue attempts through program modification and revision.

Another program attempted in this state was undertaken by a ten bed group home, serving boys and girls. After two residents went through the program and experienced a lack of success, the program was terminated. Reasons cited for the failure of this program included lack of administraive support and lack of proper transitional training for residents.

Other facilities in this state are reluctant to implement independent living programs due to the difficulties encountered by other agencies. Most facilities are small group home settings with few resources at their disposal. Proper pre-transitional training is the key

component that has been lacking in various program attempts. An on-campus educational component may be a deciding factor in overall success, and one that is available at Goodwill Industries, as well as at this private residential treatment center.

Authorities in the literature concur that pre-transitional training is the foremost requirement for adolescents to successfully move into a responsible adult life. But they do recognize the concerns for staff time involved with the required individualized attention to youth, as well as training necessities for staff working directly with the transitioning adolescent (Pasztor, et al, 1986).

Project Stepping Out developed in Baltimore County, Maryland, utilized trained volunteers to provide individualized mentorships to targeted youth (Pasztor, et al, 1986). Difficulties encountered here included organizational concerns, scheduling, and transportation difficulties. This study concluded that this individualized attention was critical to the success of the experimental group, however, in that this population achieved substantially more positive changes in social functioning skills needed for independent living than did the control group. The project coordinators summarized that "While the

project's emancipation services achieved positive results, the age-old child welfare dilemma of time, cost, and staff remains to inhibit replication." They suggest that any agency attempting to undertake such a program establish a policy committed to the individualized attention of the target population. They further conclude that clearly defined federal, state, and local policies dealing with this issue and the allocation of funding for such must be in place in order for agencies to establish and maintain programs transitioning older adolescents into independent living.

The Arizona Department of Economic Security Administration for Children, Youth and Families (Preparing Youth for Successful Independent Living, May, 1986) sets forth criteria for those directly involved with transitioning adolescents. These proposed guidelines state that certain minimum services must be provided to those youth enrolled in independent living programs. These services include 1) addressing the issue of independent living 2) education 3) jobs and career goals 4) daily living skills 5) health and family planning 6) contact with family/interpersonal relationships 7) recreational/ avocational activities 8) legal rights and responsibilities 9) utilization of community systems and services.

The recommendations made by this task force further include training on the concept of independent living provided to case managers and a community volunteer to be matched with the adolescent for guidance and support. Suggestions for state legislative offices to oversee the emancipation of youth as well as the allocation of funds are cited in this report.

In Sedgwick County, Kansas the Youth Aftercare Project was designed to meet the needs of transitioning youth ages 16 1/2 to 20 (Masterson and Hertel, 1987). Services provided through this project include assistance in locating employment and working with older adolescents in an effort to assist them in establishing new support networks and education in how to live an independent adult life. Clear admission guidelines as well as "house policies" were established for all residents involved in the project. The length of stay in the program was set at three to six months, with supervision and support continuing for one to two months after the resident moved into the final phase of independent living.

The program is comprised of a weekly schedule of events while youth is in residence at the facility itself. All phases are designed to provide the older adolsecent with training and increasing skills in preparation for independent life. Each phase is accompanied by a set of

privileges. The final phase, aftercare, provides the youth with support for a limited time span after he/she moves out of the main facility.

An information handbook outlining rules, expectations, services provided, and application forms is available through the Kansas Human Resources Services Department. This handbook identifies the benefits for and expectations of a potential applicant in the Sedgwick County Project.

Solution Strategy

In keeping with recommendations and conclusions drawn by researching the literature, it is apparent that three phases comprise a successful transition into independent living. These phases were integrated into the implementation of the project at this residential treatment facility.

The first phase, and quite possilby the key to the ultimate completion of the stated objective, is proper pre-training for the targeted adolescent. All programs reviewed have such a component in place. Additionally, lack of complete pre-training has been cited as a possible reason for the unsuccessful ventures attempted in this state.

This phase was undertaken at the center through the combined efforts of both residential and educational staff. Family teachers focused on social and maintenance skills necessary for the youth to demonstrate before he/she was considered ready for movement into the second level of the program. Included here were social skills and functional living skills, such as housekeeping, laundry, and cooking. Also emphasized here were the intangible skills of problem solving, decision making, relationship development and maintenance, and appropriate use of leisure time. Educational emphasis was on employment skills, money management, and consumer skills. Because the facility operates an on-campus school,the educational program of each resident can be individualized to meet his/her specific needs. The resident considered for independent living must be actively pursuing a high school diploma or a GED. The youth must also have obtained part-time employment and established a savings account.

A mentor was assigned to the targeted youth at this level to aid in goal setting and problem identification. This mentor remained with the youth throughout the program for support, direction, and supervision. Due to the rural setting of this facility and the lack of community resources, volunteer mentors were not considered an option.

The second phase of the program, referred to as Level II, is the semi-independent phase. The selected youth became responsible for housekeeping, menu selection and preparation, scheduling his/her outings, and contributing a portion of income to cover rent. This amount increased over the period of time that the youth remained on Level II, until the youth was contributing an amount sufficient to cover expenses for suitable housing in town. This gradual increase was designed to provide the youth with the opportunity to grow toward self-sufficiency. The resident continued to add to a savings account and pursue educational goals. Treatment plan goals and counseling continued as identified appropriate for the individual. The mentor supervised rent payment, savings contributions and approved of the resident's weekly schedule, visitors, and major purchases. The role of the mentor was demonstrated to be critical at this level, as it provided for the individualized attention stressed by authorities as necessary for transitioning youth.

The third level was to become underway when the resident moved into off campus housing. The role of the mentor is vital during the initial stages of this level, as the resident selects housing and prepares for this final transition. It is at this stage that the youth's treatment

team may recommend emancipation or extension of services to the court system. This decision must be individualized based on the youth's demonstration of appropriate skills throughout the program, and completion of identified treatment goals. The court may, at its discretion, elect to extend services to the transitioning youth, in which case the Department of Family Services retains custody and agency services will continue. If emancipation occurs, informal connection with the agency may continue. The youth would be encouraged to continue relationships with facility staff and utilize available support services. The mentor may also continue to provide direction to the youth, with emphasis on budgeting, employment, and interpersonal relationships.

Implementation Plan

The implementation tasks of the project were organized into three stages, consistent with the three levels of the program. The Residential Director assumed overall responsibility as the mentor for the project.

Task 1 - Assess the readiness of one resident for piloting the independent living program through goals identified and implement the Level I process.

Step 1: Through the use of the treatment team, one resident to pilot the program was determined. The subject was an 18 year old male who was nearing completion of his GED and was employed full time in a welding shop, while

pursuing vocational classes at night. This young man's parents lived in other states, had maintained little contact over the years, and could not be relied upon for support. The youth had met with legal difficulties in the past, and was to be present at an emancipation review in five months. He was placed with this agency at the request of the District Court Judge, who believed that he could overcome his legal problems and become a successful adult after treatment. He had been a resident at this facility for two years, and was living in the Group Home.

Responsible Individual: The author and other members of the treatment team identified the resident.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first month.

Step 2: Obtain authorization from the Executive Director to implement independent living for the identified adolescent.

Responsible Individual: The author discussed implementation with the Executive Director and received approval to begin the project.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first month.

Step 3: Obtain authorization from the adolescent's social worker and district court judge to undertake independent living with the youth.

Responsible Individual: The author obtained permission and was advised that, at the emancipation review, the court might elect to retain custody of the youth past his 19th birthday to assure his continued success.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first month.

Step 4: Assess readiness skills through interviews with residential and educational staff.

Responsible Individual: The author conducted these interviews.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first month.

Step 5: Discuss program expectations with the youth and contract for Level I goals.

Responsible Individual: The author developed a contract with the youth and monitored completion of goals.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first month.

Task 2 - Assess the readiness of the youth for movement into and implement Level II.

Step 1: The completion of contracted objectives during Level I were evaluated and it was determined that the youth was ready for transition into Level II. It is important to note here that minor noncompliant behaviors of the youth at the Group Home where he resided increased during this time and that he reported to work late on three occasions. These

difficulties were discussed with the young man and a corrective action plan developed with him. As a result, his actual movement into Level II was delayed by two weeks.

Responsible Individual: The author discussed objectives with the youth and treatment team members.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the second month.

Step 2: Advise the youth's social worker of progress on Level I.

Responsible Individual: The author maintained contact with the Department of Family Services.

Time Required: This was ongoing during the first and second months.

Step 3: Inventory belongings and identify needs of the youth to transition into on campus housing.

Responsible Individual: The youth submitted this to the author.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first and second months.

Step 4: Inventory items in the on campus house trailer.

Responsible Individual: The author conducted this inventory with the aid of maintenance personnel and assessed the condition of the trailer.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first and second months.

Step 5: Contract for responsibilities of the youth and identify objectives and guidelines of Level II.

Reponsible Individual: The author discussed this with the adolescent.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the second month.

Step 6: Establish budgeting schedule, to include rent payment, for the youth based on income.

Responsible Individual: The author developed a budget with the Business Manager.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first month.

Step 7: Establish daily rate required for services with the Department of Family Services.

Responsible Individual: The author established this with the Business Manager and achieved contract development with the Department of Family Services.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first month.

Step 8: Verify completion of educational objective.

Responsible Individual: The author completed this step. The subject attended graduation ceremonies for his GED completion prior to transition into Level II.

Time Required: Although targeted for the first month, the youth remained at risk for not completing GED requirements until the second month.

Step 9: Hold a facility housewarming for the youth to supply him with basic necessities.

Responsible Individual: The author coordinated this with the Director of Special Activities. The young man's inventory list provided ideas to staff for housewarming gifts, and staff as well as all other residents attended.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the first month.

Step 10: Youth will move into on campus trailer house.

Responsible Individual: The author supervised the youth's move.

Step 11: Monitor budget, activities, employment, meals, and treatment plan goals of the youth.

Responsible Individual: The author continued to act as mentor in this role.

Time Required: This was accomplished during the second month.

Step 12: Recommend to the court system extended services or emancipation for the youth.

Responsible Individual: The author was scheduled to attend the court hearing with the adolescent and the Residential Supervisor involved with him at the Group Home before his move into the on-campus trailer. Prior to this hearing, however, the subject encountered further legal difficulties.

Time Required: This occurred during the second month.

Due to the events that followed, outlined in Chapter 5, the project was interrupted at this point. The results of this project were successful, and the program has been incorporated into available options at this facility.

Chapter 5

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The youth involved in this project was selected to participate in an independent living program by the court and by this facility, as he had no resources or support network upon whom to rely. It was believed that this program could offer him the opportunity to enter adulthood on a positive note and change patterns that he had developed during his early adolescence.

Prior to the adolescent's scheduled court review, the author learned that the youth did not report to work one day. Upon discussion with his employer, it was learned that the youth would be fired from his job as a result. Several staff people began to search for the young man, whose whereabouts could not be determined. The subject of this study did not return to his trailer that night.

The following day the author received a phone call from a deputy sheriff of a nearby town in an adjoining state. He

reported that a young man identified as the missing youth had been involved in a gas tank explosion at approximately 3:30am that day. The youth appeared to be siphoning gas when the explosion occurred, resulting in $8000 damage to a nearby building. At approximately 4:30am, the youth had gone to the emergency room at the local hospital with burn injuries. He was treated and released. The young man still did not contact this agency. Several event occurred as a result of this serious violation of the independent living contract.

The author contacted the social worker immediately and discussed the situation. The social worker notified the County Attorney, who advised that the young man must report to the agency by 3pm the next day, or face a bench warrant being served for his arrest, and appearance before the District Court Judge. The young man made telephone contact with the center and admitted to his actions. He had been with a friend, in the friend's vehicle, and attempted to siphon gas from a tank. He would not tell of his whereabouts and did not come in to the agency, and was, therefore, arrested the following day and transported back to his county of residence to face charges of parole violation.

Although such a violation of the Guidelines for Independent Living (attached) could be considered grounds for immediate termination from both the program and from this facility, the author and staff members from the Group Home drafted a letter to the District Court, asking that the young man be allowed to return to the treatment center and be admitted once again to the Group Home. It was believed that the necessary structure could be provided for him in that setting, and perhaps he might still be successful in transitioning into an independent life at a later date.

The youth appeared before the District Court Judge in his county of residence, but was returned to this facility due to the commitment of the agency to his care. He was to return to the Group Home, but would remain no longer than his 19th birthday, one month away. At that time, this state would consider him emancipated. He was to face charges in the state in which the crime occurred, pay any fines from his savings account, purchase an airline ticket, and leave for the home of a distant aunt and uncle in another state who had agreed to accept him in their home.

The young man integrated quickly back into the Group Home environment, paid a fine of $150 dollars as a result of his criminal offense in the nearby state, and left for his aunt and uncle's home just before his birthday. He was given $20 for his trip, and the remainder of his savings was mailed to his aunt and uncle.

Conclusions

As a result of the events outlined above, the remainder of the project could not be undertaken with this subject. It is essential to note that this agency does not consider the undertaking of an independent living project as a failure. It is accepted that the project did not reach a succesful conclusion, not as a result of planning or implementation, but due to the unfortunate choices of one youth. Given the opportunity to change his life patterns, the targeted youth elected to, once again, involve himself in illegal activities, and had to pay the consequences for such activity.

This facility had accepted this young man for treatment at the request of the District Court Judge in his county of residence. The judge involved in the case had phoned the Executive Director of this agency, while she had the young man in her chambers. He had been found guilty of stealing a car, but the judge believed that a juvenile detention facility was not appropriate for this case. The father of the youth was incarcerated in another state, and the boy's mother's whereabouts was unknown. She had left this state without leaving any forwarding address.

The youth was placed directly into the Group Home, where he progressed well over the course of two years in treatment. He appeared motivated to work toward independent living, and was reported to be performing well at his job.

The acting out behavior and difficulties with GED completion occurred just prior to the youth's scheduled move into Level II of the independent living program. He seemed to be anxious over leaving the safety of the Group Home and the family environment he had found there. It was the first time such a family bond had been formed by him. Due to his age and the court involvement with him, however, the plans for transition continued. It was determined that he should proceed as planned, even though those plans were delayed by two weeks until his educational goals were met. The social worker continued to support independent living as the most appropriate option for the youth, as emancipation without transitioning would undoubtedly be unsuccessful. The District Court Judge also supported the program, but made it clear to all parties that emancipation, and the lack of continued state support associated with it, would occur if the youth found himself in further legal difficulties.

Although this young man was not successful in the independent living program, it was well received by the social worker involved and by this facility. In fact, since this event, another youth has already been identified to participate in the program, and permission from her social worker has been obtained. She will transition into Level II within one month from the writing of this report.

Recommendations

The remaining steps of the project are identifed here in an effort to aid replication of this project. The newly selected adolescent for participation in the program is a young lady completing her senior year in high school who may not return to her home due to previous abuse. She has not been involved in illegal activity, and is motivated to pursuing a successful life as an independent adult.

The remaining goals and objectives are written as they will be presented for the young woman targeted to participate in the program.

Task 3 - Assess readiness and implement Level III.

Step 1: Contract with youth for goals of Level III.

Responsible Individual: The author will contract with the youth.

Time Required: Second and third months.

Step 2: Locate suitable housing in the community.

Responsible Individual: The author will assist the adolescent in locating housing.

Time Required: Second and third months.

Step 3: Evaluate insurance costs, deposits, monthly bills of adolescent.

Responsible Individual: The author will assist the youth in this process.

Time Required: Second and third months.

Step 4: Determine withdrawals required from savings account, if any, and review financial status of adolescent.

Responsible Individual: The author will assist the youth in this process.

Time Required: Second and third months.

Step 5: Develop a monthly budget for the youth.

Responsible Individual: The author will assist the youth in budget development.

Time Required: Second and third months.

Step 6: Advise the youth's social worker of progress on Level II.

Responsible Individual: The author will maintain contact with the Department of Family Services.

Time Required: Second through third months.

Step 7: The youth will move into suitable housing in the community.

Responsible Individual: The author will supervise the youth's move.

Time Required: Third month.

Step 8: Monitor budget, activities, employment, and treatment plan goals of the youth, as contracted.

Responsible Individual: The author will act as mentor in this role.

Time Required: Third month.

Step 9: Enact the court's previous decision for extended services or emancipation for the youth.

Responsible Individual: The author is responsible to the court system.

Time Required: Third month.

This agency remains committed to the development of a program to address identified needs in this state. The first attempt was met with a lack of success, and revisions will be made according to individualized needs of targeted youth. It is not feasible to state that the failure of the identified youth should require the elimination of any youth previously involved in illegal activities. Some adolescents would, undoubtedly, be anxious to be given the opportunity to free themselves of their past, and welcome the support of such a program. The targeted youth in this project had demonstrated acceptable skills and appropriate behaviors prior to the implementation of the project. It might be assumed that his noncompliant behavior and difficulties at his work site might have been foreshadowing of eminent problems, but his response to the corrective action plan and apparent motivation discounted such thoughts. The project continues to enjoy the support of social workers throughout the state as well as the upper level administration of the agency itself.

It is believed that this facility has successfully implemented an independent living program designed to serve a limited number of youth in this state. The center will be able to provide this service to no more than two adolescents at any one time, as the demands on staff time, as well as facility restrictions, including the use of a two bedroom trailer are great. The facility will be able to serve targeted adolescents as they transition into an independent life.

The accomplishment of this project effectively lessens economic burdens on this state in that local programs cost considerably less than serving youth in out-of-state placements. In addition, the long term economic benefits to both the adolescent and the state can be considered extremely valuable. The longitudinal goal of this project is to aid in the removal of one child at a time from the state welfare system. This much needed service will be utilized by many social workers throughout the state to benefit the youth in the child care system. The selected youths will leave the system with identified skills, employment, support services, and established goals to strive for in their adult lives.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Telephone Interview with State Social Workers

Conducted by Residential Director, Residential Treatment Facility

Twenty social workers from various locations throughout the state contacted.

1. Do you believe there is a need for an independent living program to serve emotionally and behaviorally disordered adolescents in this stats?

Response: 20 YES 0 NO

2. Do you currently have youth on your caseloads in need of such a program?

Response: 12 YES 8 NO

(Total number on adolescents involved, 15)

3. In what type of placement are these 15 youth currently?

(total responses) 4 - Independent living programs out-of-state

6 - Residential treatment centers

5 - Foster care

4. Would you support this residential facility in an attempt to develop an independent living program?

Response: 20 YES 0 NO

Appendix B

Independent Living Program Introduction

The Independent Living Program has three levels through which the resident must progress. Each level is less restrictive than the previous level with the goal of placing more responsibility on the youth. By the completion of the program, the resident has progressed from the most restrictive to the least restrictive environment.

Level I is the introduction of the preparation of the resident to the experience of living in a less supervised atmosphere. The staff will teach and guide the resident in the acquisition of those skills which are necessary for one to live on his/her own. Level I takes place in residence. While in placement, a contract which specifies the precise requirements that must be met in order to progress to the second level will be initiated. Included in the contract are the specific educational, vocational and residential goals. Counseling goals and family and personal relationships as well as required transitional living skills are also specified in the contractual agreement.

Workbooks on transitional living which include money management exercises and banking, comparative shopping, family planning and job interviews will be completed prior to moving to Level II.

As the resident reaches completion of the requirement of Level I, he/she will be assigned to an adult who will work with the youth from three to ten hours per week depending on the individual needs of the youth. The responsibility of the "mentor" is that of supervision in the independent living program. The mentor will be assigned to the resident for the duration of the program, however, will mostly be used in Levels II and III.

Following completion of the Level I contract, the youth is eligible to advance to Level II. The resident will move into the house trailer on the main grounds. During this time, the youth will be supervised only by the mentor, who is supervised by the Residential Director. The focus of Level II is that of the application of the living skills acquired in Level I within a framework of nurturance, support and direction.

As with Level I, the Level II advancement will be structured by a contract. This contract will specify the goals which need to be accomplished, as well as the support that the mentor must provide, in order to assure success for the resident. The Level II contract will include all aspects which are covered on the Level I contract with the addition of emphasis on finances and budgeting.

With each month following the first month, the youth will contribute an increased share on living expenses depending on his/her ability to pay. A scale is individualized for each resident. It is expected that the resident be responsible for major expenses without the need to draw from incurred savings at the end of the six month period. The resident is expected to have saved additional money over his/her initial savings in order to advance to Level III.

The areas of concern are employment, budgeting, management of finances, time management, home management, health and personal care, decision-making, and positive interpersonal relationships. Ultimately, finding housing and procurring entirely separate, independent housing and living will be achieved.

Indirect supervision of the resident on Level II will be provided by residential staff, as the trailer is located on the grounds of the main facility. This will provide safety and a sense of security for the resident. This will also provide the staff with a way in which to monitor adherence to guidelines and rules.

The basic rules address male and female visitors and the use of alcohol or other drugs. Consequences for rule infractions are made clear to the resident at all stages of the Levels. Rules and guidelines for the Independent Living Program are attached.

Upon successful completion of the contract and with the agreement of the mentor and Residential Director, the resident will progress to Level III. This level is independent living. With the guidance and assistance of the mentor, the youth locates suitable housing in town.

As with the previous two levels, at Level III the youth contracts for specific goals. These goal areas may include areas from the two previous levels, which may need on-going emphasis. Particular emphasis is given to finances and budgeting, and relationships.

The Department of Family Services continues to provide payment to the facility until the end of the contractual term for on-going training, monitoring, counseling and other support services to the youth.

Appendix C

Independent Living Program Curriculum

I. Introduction:

The development of the independent living program is designed to meet the needs of those children who will turn 19 years of age or will be emancipated from the child welfare system with limited skills, money, or employment.

Independent living is a form of placement out of the main building or Group Home. This placement will be arranged with the Department of Family Services or other referring agencies and will be supervised under contract with the facility.

The living situation is designed to promote and to lead to the successful emancipation of the youth. This only follows some other form of out of home placement such as residential treatment. It is a means to assist the child in his/her transition from the care, custody and control of another to personal independence.

It is suggested that the Department of Family Services maintain custody of a minor involved in independent living. "Independent" in this context refers to the independence of physical custody. Emancipation is the final goal of an independent living program.

II. Eligibility:

The youth is recommended for independent living by the Treatment Team that works closely with him/her. This recommendation is presented to the individual social worker, and a determination is made as to whether independent living is in the best interest of the child. The case plan will include the following:

A. Behaviors while in residence
B. Academic status
C. Employment
D. Status of family situation

As outlined in the "Children and Family Services Manual, Volume VI of the Department of Family Services, Child Protection Services Rules," Chapter 3, Section 4:

"The criteria for entry into independent living is:

A. A youth must be 17 to 18 years of age.
B. No other approved placement exists.
C. Department of Family Services has custody.
D. The youth is in an out of home placement.

Additionally, the youth must be involved in a full time program while participating in the independent living program. This may be achieved through employment or a combination of employment and school. The youth must be involved in an educational program, pursuing a high school diploma or a G.E.D. Should one of the educational goals be previously achieved, this does not apply.

Financial assistance for Independent Living will not exceed six months, as it is a time-limited service.

Reason for termination of financial assistance include:

A. Case plan completion
B. Marriage
C. Living with someone of the opposite sex
D. Enlistment in the armed forces, Job Corps, etc.
E. Living out of state
F. Living with parent
G. Conviction of a crime
H. Fraudulent reporting of information
I. Violation of "Guidelines for Independent Living".

III. Curriculum:

In order to meet the minimal requirement of survival in the adult world, instruction in the following areas will be provided to the youth:

A. Location and maintenance of housing.
B. Home management
    1. food purchasing
    2. food preparation
    3. cooking
    4. cleaning
    5. laundry
C. Shopping
    1. food
    2. clothes
    3. household supplies

D. Community services and systems
   1. transportation - public
   2. transportation - private
   3. assistance availability and applications
E. Health
   1. personal care
   2. family planning
   3. medical assistance
F. Money management
   1. finances
   2. budgets
   3. savings
G. Leisure time
   1. recreational or vocational activities
   2. knowledge of natural resources (fishing, swimming, etc.)
H. Employment
   1. job seeking skills and resources
   2. job survival skills

IV. Development of Independent Living:

All independent living programs will be handled on a case by case basis. Approval must be given by the Department of Family Services or the referring agency of the youth involved.

Requests for payment from provider will include the following:

A. Identification information of youth.
   1. name
   2. date of birth
   3. current placement
B. Estimated length of plan
C. Monthly budget of the youth
D. Monthly cost to referring agency
E. Program specific to youth, ie
   1. school
   2. work
   3. Child Protective Services homemaker

V. Payment:

Payments for independent living will be contracted with the referring agency. They payments for goods/services for a youth on the Independent Living Program will be made directly this facility.

Appendix D

Guidelines for Independent Living

I. Outings:

A. Weekly schedule must be turned in to mentor by 7am Monday

B. Resident must have weekend plans outlined for approval by mentor and Residential Director by Wednesday of each week.

C. Attend AA meetings a minimum of 1 time per week, if outlined in youth's Treatment Plan.

D. Attend GED classes a minimum of 1 time per week, if pursuing GED completion.

E. Attend and maintain passing grades in high school or college classes regularly if enrolled in an educational program.

F. Report on time when scheduled for work.

G. Return home by 10 pm week nights and 12 am weekends.

H. Transportation for all outings is the responsibility of the resident, with approval by the Residential Director.

II. Visitors:

A. Any visitors must be introduced to and approved by the Residential Director.

B. Level II - no visitors, other than family members or facility staff are allowed in the house trailer.

C. Level III - approved visitors or staff must not remain past 10 pm during the first week of Level III, with number of visits and time of visitor departure increasing weekly as approved by the Residential Director.

D. No overnight guests are allowed.

III. Controlled substances:

A. Alcohol and other controlled substances are not allowed in the residence while the youth is under the supervision of this facility.

B. The youth is not to indulge in the use of any controlled substance while under the supervision of this residential facility.

IV. Violations:

A. These guidelines will be contracted with each individual participating in the Independent Living Program.

B. The violation of any guideline will result in consequences for the youth, and revisions of his/her contract and program as deemed appropriate.

C. Violations of these guidelines may result in the termination of the Independent Living Program for that youth.

Appendix E

Independent Living Program - Role of the Mentor

The role of the Residential Director will be vital to the success of the independent living program.

At Level I, the Residential Director is on the periphery of the program.

At Level II, the Residential Director is responsible for the contracted support, direction, guidance, teaching and contact with the youth. The Residential Director will spend more time with the youth in areas in which he/she is less proficient. The Residential Director is the contact person for facility staff as well as the referring agency.

As the youth progresses to Level III, he/she should demonstrate skills necessary for independent living. The Residential Director continues to monitor and direct the youth as he/she prepares to live without adult supervision. Official involvment with this residential facility terminates after a maximum of six months, although unofficial involvement may continue.

Appendix F

Independent Living Program
Department of Family Services Involvement

The Department of Family Services contracts with this residential facility for the cost of room and board while a youth is in residential treatment. The cost of services for enrollment in the Independent Living Program remainsconsistent with this daily rate until the end of the contract term.

The daily rate includes the cost of facility staff for counseling, grocery shopping, leisure time guidance, multiple contacts monthly, and transportation.

While on Level II, part of the daily rate may include expenses for laundry in the main building and the utilization of the trailer for living quarters.